

HAIGHT

12 / 29 / 39

Interview with Harry Haight,  
Industrial Relations Manager

Mr. Haight's opening remark dealt with Mr. Eastman as a hard worker and the recollection arose of lunch being brought to him every day from home in the early days, it possibly being cooked by Mr. Eastman's mother.

Mr. Haight came with the company in 1902, although he did not come to Rochester until 1914. He was in Chicago at the turn of the century and was engaged there to take charge of the Eastman Boston branch--a distributing house for goods to photographic dealers throughout New England. It was a combination of the two oldest photo supply houses in New England, the Horgan-Robey Company and Benjamin French. When combined under charge of Mr. Haight they took the name Robey-French company.

His first words with Mr. Eastman were obtained en route from Chicago to Boston. He asked Mr. Eastman what instructions he had to give. Mr. Eastman said "No instructions. Run this business as you would your own." Mr. Haight noted that Mr. Eastman picked executives with the feeling that they could manage with general instructions, without the need for detailed ones.

Mr. Haight had formed a company in Chicago in 1897 for dealing in cameras and photo supplies and sold out in December 1899 after having been very successful. They did not make paper but bought it. It was difficult to buy from others and sell dealers at a profit so in 1898 they undertook to make paper. They started a plant in Chicago

Haight, Harry

- 2 -

to make Cyko paper. When the company was sold to the Rochester Optical and Camera Company the sale was contingent upon Mr. Haight staying out of the photo supply business for ten years. He finally consented provided they would sell him the photo paper business at book cost and also provided he could make satisfactory arrangements with the chemist who was then making emulsions for the paper. The paper business was no good to him if he didn't have someone who could make emulsion.

He negotiated with the chemist and he agreed verbally to Mr. Haight's terms. Consequently, the following day Mr. Haight signed the release to keep out of the photograph supply business, except for paper making, for a period of ten years. The next day the chemist repudiated his agreement stating that he was going into business with associates. The chemist continued with his associates for several years and then failed. The business was sold to Anthony Scoville Company at Binghamton, this company being later called "AnSCO." They continued making Cyko paper.

I asked Mr. Haight how he regarded Mr. Eastman in the days when he was a competitor. He replied: "I couldn't really be called a competitor. The business was too small, being about half a million dollars a year, and the business lasting only three years."

In the interval between December 1899 when he sold the Chicago company and September 1902 when he came with the Eastman Kodak Company Mr. Haight was associated with some others in the manufacturing end of the photographic supply business in Chicago. The stockholders in that company who had signed to invest certain amounts in the business were reluctant to complete their payments on the ground they couldn't

Haight, Harry

- 3 -

hope to be successful with the Eastman Kodak Company as a competitor. So they determined to sell and Mr. Haight was selected as an "ambassador" to call upon Mr. Eastman and find if he would buy them up.

He had a pleasant visit and Mr. Eastman assured him he should like to see them continue. They need have no fear of competition from Eastman Kodak through its distributing branches, he said, but if they were determined to sell he would see that they got a fair price for their assets. Mr. Haight sold to Sweet-Wall<sup>ach</sup>ington Company, Chicago, which was a distributing branch for Eastman Kodak Company. They treated Mr. Haight's organization royally. Mr. Haight then being available for another connection, Frank S. Noble negotiated to bring him into the Eastman fold.

At that time about 90% of the photographic paper being used was the "printing out" sort and Mr. Haight, with some others, felt that the paper of the future was the "developing out" type. Cyko and Velox were "developing out" papers that started the same year. A million and a half dollars was done in Cyko paper alone.

Mr. Haight in 1914 went to South America on behalf of Eastman Kodak to examine the possibilities of establishing distributing branches in the principal South American countries. He went with Mr. Delgado, the Export Manager, visiting Buenos Aires, Rio de Janeiro, Santiago, Lima and Montevideo. The purpose was to establish the foreign business on a firm basis, to meet foreign competition and obtain a stable market by being "on the ground" with materials when they were wanted. Until the distributors were established, South American dealers had to pay their cash and then wait for their goods to arrive.

Haight, Harry

- 4 -

On the way back to the United States in the Van Dyke, a British combination passenger and cargo ship, they were captured on November 1, 1914 by the German raider, Karlsruhe which had previously captured seventeen vessels. The raider wanted the cargo of frozen beef and mutton. After sinking the Van Dyke the passengers remained aboard a small German cargo boat for about a week while the Karlsruhe intercepted additional ships. They were landed at Para and had to come home on a cargo boat.

War conditions brought difficulties in the way of supplies. Film had not come into general use by professional photographers in 1914 and there was considerable dependence for glass for dry plates upon Belgium where skilled labor made a very good product. Although Eastman Kodak had a good stock of glass the future didn't look too rosy. On his return from South America November 1, 1914 Mr. Haight canvassed the country to buy up old glass negatives from photographers in the big centers. The material--some seventy carloads in all--was sent to Rochester, the emulsion removed, the plates cleaned and then re-used. Mr. Haight does not know whether Mr. Eastman originated this salvaging idea. To obtain material from smaller towns a mail campaign was made up, and this showed how material should be packed and sent in to Rochester. The supply of glass thus obtained tided over until American photographic supply dealers and manufacturers got going.

Mr. Haight's opinion is that the convenience of film rather than the temporary scarcity of glass determined the rapid replacement of glass negatives by film.

Haight, Harry

- 5 -

Prior to 1914 Eastman Kodak Company also obtained all of its gelatine abroad. An experimental plant her had only started when war broke out.

Along more personal lines, Mr. Haight stated that he would always receive a brief but cordial letter from Mr. Eastman at Christmas-time thanking him for his accomplishments during the year and nearly always telling him to draw an additional sum after the ensuing first of January. "I trust this will be satisfactory" was the invariable close of such letters. In later years when Mr. Haight was sort of a free-lance or "Handy Andy" on Mr. Eastman's personal payroll he once forgot to write and apparently there was no pay increase. Later Mr. Eastman apologized and dated the increase from the beginning of the previous year.

Mr. Eastman telephoned Mr. Haight in New York in 1920 and asked how soon he could assume the position of manager of industrial relations. Mr. Haight replied "Mr. Eastman, I don't think I'm qualified. My predecessor was a brilliant, well educated man and you know my deficiencies." "Well," Mr. Eastman countered, "You know the company and its policies as well as anyone and so far as your 'deficiencies' are concerned, do as I do. When I don't know as much about a matter as I should, I hire someone who does know."

An old concern's policies, in Mr. Haight's opinion, are something that "you can't put on paper. They are something you grow up with." In many problems, personally, he often asks himself the question "What would Mr. Eastman do under similar circumstances?" Asked regarding Mr. Eastman's broad policy for directing industrial relations Mr. Haight expressed it thus: "It's your job to see that

Haight, Harry

every employee of this company gets a square deal."

In the years when executives were so busy with expansion and taking care of the flow of goods that contact with the rank and file had to be left with the foremen and superintendants, all of whom were not of uniformly superior temperament or method. The job of the industrial relations department is to coordinate department practices and have them uniform throughout the organization, and to stand between the upper management and the employees by seeing that this idea is effected.

*Wrong  
The  
First was  
distribution  
of \$50,000  
in 1897 of '98*

Mr. Eastman's first major step in sharing with his employees was the Stock Dividend. He felt the company had grown rapidly beyond expectation of the most enthusiastic stockholder and he wanted to show his appreciation of workers who had helped make this growth possible. He contributed 10,000 of his personal shares of Eastman Kodak stock (afterwards these became 100,000 when the stock was cut up ten for one) with the understanding that the company would do the same. These were allotted to old employees on a basis that didn't entail any payment. The stock was worth \$540 at the time of the first dividend and would total \$33,000,000 in today's market. The price to the employee was \$100 per share but this was paid from dividends accruing from this gift. The funds obtained from Mr. Eastman's stock went to the Kodak Welfare Fund, and those from the company stock went to the Treasury.

One of the first things that Mr. Haight did as Industrial

- 7 -

Relations Manager was to originate the Eastman Savings and Loan Association. Mr. Eastman was keen for anything that would help the employee to help himself. This organization now represents \$7,000,000 of employee savings. Under Mr. Haight's direction, land was bought and houses were built and sold to employees at cost.

These developments came of necessity, Mr. Haight believed. Rents were bounding upward and there were not sufficient facilities for putting up desirable homes at reasonable prices. So the company built the houses and furnished means for financing them on reasonable terms. He pointed out that there were fewer facilities in this line then than now and it also cost more for financing, building, etc.

Regarding Mr. Eastman's participation in employee relations activities, Mr. Haight noted that he would always show up at outings-- in the early days at least. Business, however, remained his main concern. Mr. Haight has been told that the day before Mr. Eastman died, he made a tour of Kodak Park and studied it very thoroughly.

Mr. Eastman's helpfulness extended to the encouragement of anyone who experienced hard knocks, but was of a constructive sort that "helped people to help themselves." If a family--whether associated with Kodak or not--was in hard luck and he knew about it he would help make them self-sustaining until they got started again. Mr. Haight remembered one instance where a paralyzed man--in this case a former employee--was in great difficulty. The man's wife wanted to try her hand in conducting a rooming house in order to support the family. So Mr. Eastman had Mr. Haight's department arrange to obtain a place and to furnish it. The woman then made good and was able to maintain her husband and family within a reasonable time.

Haight, Harry